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THE VESTMENTS

Asking the point to penetrate
some flowers can grow without shadow
I am not remembering rightly
some hills have only an up
and nothing hurries you, Levity, to rise.

Do you want to taste the clouds?
Do you want everything to be clearer than the world?
Semnai theai Powys calls them,
Goddesses much to be revered
whose ægis covers us. The clouds.

Blur or flurry or soft of their meanings.
Do you want it simple as beer
done by Egyptians with sugar in the dark

then they let you have it
you in your wet clothes
addicted to action?

Sometimes it is warm at the barrier of sense
their zebra finches' egg was cracked
but still the couple drove their first-born away
always leaving room for the next remark

o sex you rhetoric

Rousseau was like God his highest pleasure in self-revealing
tempests of Exodus healed in living cloth

for we were truly naked once
and what you call our naked bodies
were the first and second Garments woven

Nessus suits we can't take off.

But we were naked once
before the sexes

and so called naked people still
feel or give
a tiny thrill of that first

Presence

we were before the myth of clothes
became the word of flesh,

yet this too is a sweet weaving
this cloud of toothache and brief orgasm
in which we find and lose and give ourselves.

Striptease a species of philosophy
that like formal logic gets
stuck in its procedures. Obsessed
with know-how it knows nothing.

To arouse without reminding—
what good is that?
Or remind without revealing,
what benefit?

For we were naked once of such distinctions.

9 January 1993

WINTERDAY

for Charlotte

That the sky seems to fall
le ciel est glace
the water is a locked door the birds
hide in cloud

where is the sweet conversation
of the little dam the Latin
spoken by gravity
in all that silvery tumbling

Earth has invaded heaven
the arrogant sobriety
of our dark habits
impeaches luminosity

lovers will be miles apart
clean smell of the skin
on the backs of their hands
thinking she

is on the other side of the snow.

10 January 1993

In at *the mort*, the respire,
gasp of the dying animal the hoot
of hunters, celebrating

a wash of grey over the morning
and it's all done, it's far away,
nothing is left but death in the field

demon pleasures of the mindless rich.

10 January 1993

“AND THE FEAST IS FOLLOWED BY THE COMMON DAY...”

—Leopardi

for Frederick Hammond

Each one of us knows one poem
 maybe one single poem
that no one else knows,

and each one brings it, we bring it with us
 all the sea weed and Gothic arches of it
into the light of other people's hearing,

into their private lives.

10 January 1993

AN INCIDENT OF DOMESTIC HISTORY

Climbing up the stairs he saw the steps
coming towards him the treads
advancing faster and faster
until it seemed to him he was falling

and even as his feet reached the top of the stairs
his body was hurtling down
he stood panting at the top
and felt his body crash from tread to tread

and still not reach the bottom.
What is this that comes towards us? he asked
and understood that he was dying
and was neither going nor coming nor staying.

11 January 1993

for Charlotte

The word in his hands
wondering

the faculty asleep to charm
small birds

a line is what begins with The

a line is music as a feather
falls he doesn't know

the gravity of the occasion
so caught up he she
in speaking to it

the words by armature unseen
wound or wounded round
stand free

 and airs (L'aura)
 coaxes to,
 this old shake
used to call the Dance,

secret consolamentum
 of the Cathars
 the sacrament
 of giving your body
to someone else What

 other garden do we have to give?

You go on foot to it. The road
is the same as the mountain.

Climb into the curious sound
she tells me is the whistle of a hawk

and up there in the house made alone of
light live inside the word.

11 January 1993

for Charlotte

Mourning dove in snow

the walls of this little valley
go up grey today
bare trees in lightly falling snow
turn mist the mist turns rock

the cliffs comprehend us
and a little water goes

it is like living in a bone

Allow the hand to move

the scattered letters
 ("alphabet soup")
will never stop
 coming back and making sense

Dog on the beach at Malibu
 a tarry dog
stumbling over the mildly crashing waves

I have the sand in my hand
I listen to it
then let it sift away
and listen to my skin instead
that touches everything
there is no dog or beach or sea or dove it doesn't tell

It is like living in a hill
above the world and under it at once

everything is an adventure
everything comes

but I didn't mean to talk about my skin
that map of France, Garance,
I didn't mean
 yet one more river
the Dranse falling just past your toes
into interminable caverns full of moss and cyclamen and guides

I didn't mean this politics at all
I live inside
 this hungry place
 the Battlefield of Endurance,
Patient Corners,
 my house of cards
my head's deep south, my dixie,
 my precious human body, my dread

I wanted to talk about something
 that lasts longer than that
like an Old Welsh grammar
 or a leaf.

12 January 1993

EARTHQUAKE WEATHER.

More snow more flakes more hexagrams.
Print learned from hand
now to admire how
a hand feigns print.
How well we do
what we sometimes are.
Teach machine to teach us.
People in the salt mines
sous-Detroit their avenues
open to miraculous revenge—
the whole world of minerals is against us!
They are Gods the crystals, the angles
that live inside the earth! And they deny us
for all our taking, our deep envy,
how much we want to be
what we think they are, things,
just things. *A cube of it
inside her she is inside.*
Absolute answers from time's emulsions
precipitated. Out. The ancient print
returns me to the top menu
namely the resting mind
above the fretful relays of the brain
itself a kind of angry bone
beautifully dithering, Admiral,
to be in control of perpetual motion,
waves, no fleet but the day's weather.

13 January 1993

LES ENFANTS

for Charlotte

Every man in love is just a fool
and this fool is the plowman of the world
the helmsman and the magistrate
for whom the law is made

And this fool in his floury white clothes
bedraggled through the jostling streets of
what is always Paris when I love you
rushes to you his empty hands his lips

wide open silently mouthing your name.

13 January 1993

A face of leather
pried loose from the
shoe of mind a year
the river of Berlin
pins stuck to the lapel
of her the Air
Force of Underground
we fly the soles of our feet
she sauntered
out of the mountain
into my mind
glass in hand
a kind of duchess of earthquakes
a kind of obligation
remembered from before some long War :

Her smile was made of lipstick
but did smile, her eyes
were made of smoke but did see me.
Alone of all the brotherhood I had caressed her hair.

13 January 1993

CAUSE HIDDEN IN EFFECT

The hand reaching out of the desert
carries the infrequent blossom of the Caducerea

it is red with white stipples on its sepals
it is red with yellow business in its heart

I don't know enough about his flower
I know only his arm, it is a man's rough arm

reaching out of the desert with this blossom
proffered to me like a casual remark

from a friend at my side as we walk along
through a crowded market commenting

on this and on that but there's no one here
no crowd no city no busy rememberers.

It is a hand holding a red flower in some desert
and it means to be giving it to me.

What kind of friendship or even love is it
that finds expression in such mysterious presents

puzzling the way a shadow is on the glaring sand
and I look up and see that nobody's there.

14 January 1993

WINTERDAY : 2

for Charlotte

Belonging to the thing seen

holding on to that—
because the weather is no rich inheritance

but we do have it
here something white and feathery
along every tree

looking for a book of poems by Robert Barlow
the kettle has come to a boil
January is halfway through

they are waiting for me at the end of it
with knives with miracles

belonging to the gods we intuit in the empty room
the marble air.

14 January 1993

"We must act as our wise Devil did," murmured Murdrawla, "and sit on the floor of the World while the rising tide of Nature's wildest intention is checked by a splutter of chance and calmed down by the steadily blowing wind of destiny."

—J.C.Powys, *Three Fantasies*, 101.

This is a sentence written by an 87 year old man.
I wonder if a finer one came out of this century.
Even if neither he nor I really know what Chance or Destiny
could possibly mean in or out of context. The words
don't matter. The sentence matters.
The shape of it matters. Like a glacier, a continent.
A planet. Of which we are momentarily the population.

15 January 1993

**Meaning is the commandment of the patriarch
but sensation the gift of the motherhouse—**

**therefore the translator is free to free her poem
from the propositional into the experiential**

**that is, the order (= succession) of image
experiences (images experienced in relation).**

15 January 1993

Always to meet the lad carved rock the horse heavy Rock Chalk
Cafe the murders in sunlight what can be gained by resistance
Gestapo manners on the rise it is a political weather believe me
Ink costs more than bread bread costs more than cigarettes
That is how it was the relations of production geologist's *pioche*
Underearthing Trotsky the cheapest thing I could bring you
Would be news of a flower seen somewhere growing heard of
January in the back of mind also worth bothering you with
My pusher my banker and me the means of production renew
Vile contract law a rock leaps from the cliff saves the assassin
No jury convicts a hopeless amalgam of misprints a poem
What is this thing in his brain on the verge of minding his mind

16 January 1993

